

GUNNS' PROPOSED TAMAR VALLEY PULP MILL SAGA:

Timeline of Key Events: 2003 - 2017

The saga of the pulp mill began in June 2003 with then Deputy Premier Paul Lennon spotted having dinner with John Gay, CEO of Gunns Limited, with documents sighted on the table which referred to a proposal to build a pulp mill. Following that revelation both the State and Federal Labor and Liberal parties were in lock-step support for the pulp mill despite growing community outrage and dissent. Below are a few key 'highlights' over the last 14 years that the toxic pulp mill cloud has hung over Tasmania, blighting Tasmanian politics, community, and reputation.

- **June 2003** – Gunns' intentions for a pulp mill were leaked to then-Greens Leader Peg Putt, who subsequently 'blew the whistle' on the plans by raising the matter in the State Parliament.
- **November 2003** - guidelines for the mill were released by the government.
- **June 2004** – revised environmental guidelines for a pulp mill in Tasmania released.
- **June 2004** – Media reports that *"Prime Minister John Howard has promised \$5 million to Tasmanian timber giant Gunns Ltd if it goes ahead with its proposed \$1 billion pulp mill."*
- **August 2004** – Lennon Labor government announced that a pulp mill "co-ordinating unit" would be housed within the Department of Economic Development. The Unit would be headed by Mr Bob Gordon, formerly the Forestry Tasmania General Manager of Marketing, and would be known as the Pulp Mill Taskforce.
- **November 2004** – Premier Lennon announces the Gunns' pulp mill proposal to be assessed as a Project of State Significance under the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* (at Gunns Ltd's request),
- **November 2004** – also revealed that Forestry Tasmania and Gunns Ltd had entered into a pulp mill wood supply agreement before any pulp mill plans were made public.
- **December 2004** – Announced that Greens MPs (then Greens Leader Peg Putt and Senator Bob Brown) and other community representatives were subject to a Gunns' lawsuit targeting 20 individuals and organisations (who became known as the Gunns20).
- **September-December 2006** – RPDC pulp mill assessment and public hearings process.
- **January 2007** – Warwick Raverty and Julian Green announced resignations from the Pulp Mill Assessment Panel. Green resigned from the Assessment Panel due to Pulp Mill Task Force interference, and also resigned as Executive Commissioner of RPDC.
- **January 2007** – Premier Lennon travelled from Hobart to Launceston for crisis talks with Gunns' boss John Gay. Described by some as *"scurrying up the highway."*
- **February 2007** - Former Supreme Court Judge Christopher Wright QC formally appointed to Chair RPDC Pulp Mill Panel.
- **February 2007** - Christopher Wright reported in local media as saying Gunns was to blame for the timeline blow-out and the assessment panel would not meet with John Gay in private despite a request to do so.

- **March 2007** - Gunns informed Stock Exchange that they had withdrawn from the RPDC process, citing indefinite timeline as “commercially unviable”.
- **March 2007** - Premier Lennon announced Gunns Ltd had pulled out of the RPDC process, blaming apparent uncertainty and time delays of the RPDC process. (Subsequent FOI documentation released in June 2007 revealed that failure by Gunns to meet the RPDC process deadlines was the cause in the timeline blow-outs, not the actions of the RPDC.)
- **March 2007** - Premier held emergency Cabinet and Caucus meetings to canvas other options for the pulp mill.
- **March 2007** – Emerged through media reports that in late February 2007, a meeting with Premier Paul Lennon, Treasurer Michael Aird, Attorney General Steve Kons and Solicitor General Bill Bale all met with John Gay and the Gunns Board in the Premier’s Hobart Executive Suite, to discuss pulp mill process options.
- **March 2007** - Premier Lennon announced his government would table legislation to ‘assess’ the Gunns’ Pulp Mill proposal, with Parliament being specially recalled the following week to debate the *Pulp Mill Assessment Bill 2007 (No.9)*.
- **March 2007** - Former Justice Christopher Wright and RPDC Pulp Mill Assessment panel chair held an extraordinary press conference where he disputed the Premier’s version of events surrounding the RPDC’s timeline for the proposal’s assessment. Media coverage reported Mr Wright as accusing Mr Lennon “of a ‘completely inappropriate...attempt to pressure’ him to fast-track assessment of the project.”
- **April 2007** – Lennon Labor’s fast-track *Pulp Mill Assessment Bill 2007 (No 9)*, receives Royal Assent.
- **June 2007** – FOI documentation received by the Greens MPs’ raised significant concerns the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet had interfered in the RPDC process back in March by requesting that the RPDC not inform Gunns Ltd that their Supplementary Information was deficient, and amounted to “critically non-compliance”.
- **August 2007** - Local Government Association of Tasmania voted to advise Tasmanian Government that the fast-track legislation for the mill is “weakening” the planning system.
- **30 August 2007 - The Pulp Mill Permit**, as defined in the *Pulp Mill Assessment Act 2007*, passed the House of Assembly (with only the 4 Greens MPs voting against), and also passed the Legislative Council (with only four MLCs voting against), and came into effect. At the time of passing the Act it was not considered necessary for the Pulp Mill Assessment Act to contain a date by which the Permit would expire, had the project not substantially commenced, but then uncertainty arose under LUPAA (where permits lapse after two years of inadequate ‘action’ occurring).
- **April 2008** – Deputy Premier and Attorney-General Steve Kons resigns from the Front Bench after being forced to admit he had misled Parliament over whether he had signed a Magistrate Appointment letter, and then later denied making that appointment, due to alleged ‘payback’ against the appointee regarding actions taken on pulp mill related matters.
- **May 2008** – Paul Lennon announces his resignation from the Parliament. David Bartlett elected by Labor as new Premier, Lara Giddings as Deputy Premier.

- **October 2009** – Uncertainty about validity of Pulp Mill Permit arises. The Director of the Environment Protection Authority, Mr Warren Jones, wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment advising that, on the basis of advice that he had received from the Solicitor-General, uncertainty had arisen over whether the terms of the Permit had been complied with or not.
- **November 2009** - Bartlett Labor introduces the *Pulp Mill Assessment Amendment (Clarification) Bill 2009* providing Gunns an extended lifeline of four years, until 30 August 2011. The government stated that the Bill ensured, “that regulators can be certain that, should Gunns not have substantially commenced the project by 30 August 2011, the pulp mill permit lapses and Gunns’ authority to build and operate the pulp mill is extinguished.”
- **May 2011** - The State Greens MPs’ debate their Bill to repeal the Pulp Mill Act, but it was voted down by Labor and the Liberals.
- **August – September 2011** – Government contended that validity of Pulp Mill Permit would probably need to be tested in court, leaving the matter hanging.
- **[2009-2012** – *Gunns Ltd struggled during this period to obtain necessary Commonwealth approvals, to secure investment funding for the pulp mill, and then to even just keep the company afloat.]*
- **25 September 2012** - impacted by the global economic downturn that reduced the demand and prices achieved for export woodchips, Gunns Limited entered voluntary administration and appointed KordaMentha as receivers and managers.
- **28 January 2014** – Labor Premier Lara Giddings recalls Parliament to introduce and pass the *Pulp Mill Assessment Amendment Bill 2014*. The Bill, at the request of KordaMentha was intended to provide certainty to any new proponent that the Pulp Mill Permit is still in force by extending the time during which the Pulp Mill Project (the Project) must be substantially commenced from four to 10 years from the date the Permit first came into effect, 30 August 2007.
- **30 August 2017** – The 2014 last lifeline Bill for Gunns’ pulp mill establishes that the entire Pulp Mill Permit lapses if the Project is not substantially commenced before the end of the period of 10 years from the Pulp Mill Permit coming into force [PMP came into force on 30 August 2007] – ***the Pulp Mill Permit lapses on 30 August 2017, and that must be the end of this toxic ill-conceived project.***